

Each year the 12,000 beef cattle farmers in West Virginia market approximately \$80 million of cash sales of primarily feeder cattle in the state. Our agriculture statistics indicates that there is well over \$200 million inventory value of our livestock industry. Most economists generally use the \$5 multiplier factor when evaluating economic returns for a enterprise, therefore, it is estimated that the beef cattle business in West Virginia generate an additional \$200 million in purchases of feed, seed, fertilizer, auction market services, slaughter house services, equipment dealers and other business activity.

A major success story for the WVDA has been the development of the Board/tel-o-auction sales. This program was started in 1986 and has grown from marketing 1,200 feeder cattle to a little over 11,000 this year. This program has solidly outperformed other marketing endeavors to the tune of \$3-\$5/cwt premium on livestock produced here in West Virginia. During the past year, livestock specialists graded approximately 48,000 feeder cattle through 85 special sales during the spring and fall grading programs. Approximately \$25 million worth of feeder cattle were marketed through the board/tel-o-auction and special feeder sales activities. These specialty programs for board sales have seen steady growth throughout the years with the exception of the 1999 drought-influenced year. This year's data indicate an approximate 12 percent increase in the number of cattle marketed using the board sale program over the drought-influenced 1999 data.

Exciting opportunities continue to be presented to West Virginia farmers through cooperation with WVU Extension Programs. We have seen an increase in the number of feeder calves marketed through our special board sale program. We are now marketing a little over 4,500 head of feeder cattle that are pre-weaned, pre-vaccinated, and generally seeing \$5-\$10/cwt premiums for this effort. This program adds \$250,000 additional income to the 150 farms that participate in this statewide program.

One of the original goals for the board/tel-o-auction marketing system was to have a year-round marketing system for our farmers in West Virginia. We are now nearing that goal, with board sales having occurred in the months of July, August, September, October and November, as well as during the winter months of January, February and March. This provides an excellent opportunity for our farmers to participate in "out-of-season" marketings and, therefore, lessen the pressure to the movement

of livestock in West Virginia during the traditional October heavy run time period.

Board/tel-o-auction technology continues to be a valuable tool as we have seen other areas of the country to begin entering into the marketplace. Traditional marketing of feeder cattle through regular sales at West Virginia auction markets continues to decline at a rate of 1-2 percent per year, depending upon location. However, due to the nature of many of our small producers who will not be able to participate in some of the other systems, we do anticipate the continuation of the need of our graded in-barn marketing systems to assist our producers with those who have 20 cows or less at their home farms.

The livestock section collected market news on approximately 116,000 head of livestock during the past year. These reports were made and collected from more than 360 locations throughout the year. Livestock prices were collected at the following livestock markets: South Branch, Jackson County, Parkersburg, Greenbrier Valley, Weston, Marlinton, Buckhannon and Terra Alta. In addition to those regularly collected sales, occasional collections were conducted at Spencer and Ohio County. All livestock market news reports were forwarded to the Charleston office and made available through the WVDA website as well as through the USDA reporting system.

The activities performed by the livestock section have been very successful in providing our beef farmers with a great economic opportunity. Large numbers of livestock have been graded for \$3-\$5 premiums/cwt. This puts numerous additional dollars into our farmers pockets that are in turn reinvested in a number of ways into the economy of West Virginia. We have seen continued success and steady progress in the beef cow program at the General John McCausland Memorial Farm. The Livestock Section continued to seek and implement programs that have a positive on livestock marketing and the production of feeder cattle.